



## DOSSIER TECHNOLOGICAL & CULTURAL CHANGES IN THE DIGITAL ERA

### Cinema and the Art of Anachronism

*Cine y el Arte del Anacronismo*

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**Abstract:** This study argues that the way visual art forms migrate and transform from one media to another over time can be traced through their varied relationships to temporality. By introducing a model of "artistic anachronism," it is possible to better understand the way these transformations take place. After establishing some of the theoretical characteristics of anachronism, the study turns to the films of the French filmmaker Robert Bresson, and the way he directly references painting through his films. Such an examination provides a model for future studies that use anachronism as a way of better understanding the way migrations take place between visual media both old and new.

**Keywords:** Cinema. Anachronism. Robert Bresson.

**Resumen:** Este estudio argumenta que la forma en que las formas de arte visual migran y se transforman de un medio a otro a lo largo del tiempo se puede rastrear en sus diferentes relaciones con la temporalidad. Al introducir un modelo de "anacronismo artístico", es posible comprender mejor la forma en que se producen estas transformaciones. Después de establecer algunas de las características teóricas del anacronismo, el estudio se centra en las películas del cineasta francés Robert Bresson, y la forma en que hace referencia directamente a la pintura a través de sus películas. Tal examen proporciona un modelo para futuros estudios que utilizan el anacronismo como una forma de comprender mejor la forma en que se producen las migraciones entre los medios visuales.

**Palabras clave:** Cine. Anacronismo. Robert Bresson.

**Resumo:** Este estudo argumenta que a forma como os formatos de arte visual migram e se transformam de uma mídia para outra ao longo do tempo pode ser traçada em suas diferentes relações com a temporalidade. Ao introduzir um modelo de "anacronismo artístico", é possível compreender melhor a forma como essas transformações ocorrem. Depois de estabelecer algumas das características teóricas do anacronismo, o estudo se volta para os filmes do cineasta francês Robert Bresson, e a forma como ele faz referência direta à pintura através de seus filmes. Tal exame fornece um modelo para estudos futuros que usam o anacronismo como forma de entender melhor a forma como as migrações ocorrem entre as mídias visuais.

**Palavras-chave:** Cinema. Anacronismo. Robert Bresson.

### Introduction

When, how, and why do the visual arts rely on anachronism? Can we better understand the cinematic experience by examining the way its anachronisms emerge, both in the way a film is constructed, as well as in cinema's relations to other visual media, such as television, painting, and contemporary digital formats? Of course, nostalgia plays a signifi-



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cant role in the way television programming and film draw on the style, attitudes, behavior, and mise en scène of previous epochs and periods. There is something inherently nostalgic about the visual experience, especially when a present moment is fraught with anxiety or dread. However, in this study I am less interested in the phenomena of nostalgia that returns a viewer to a more comfortable time and locale, than in the way particular films juxtapose the present with the past in order to generate a third time that provokes and challenges the viewer. I plan to explore some of the distinctive characteristics of cinematic anachronism as a way of arriving at a better understanding of cinema, especially in its relationship to other contemporary visual technologies.

When a film cites a painting, it offers another temporality to understand the image. I have explored this tendency in the work of Robert Bresson, whose films draw heavily on references to painting as a way of invoking other distinct temporalities that carry the film outside the time and space of the film. Drawing attention to that temporality allows for the possibility of anachronism, and for the untimely to emerge. Bresson admits in his work that he strives to create anachronism, especially with films that take place in the historical past, like *Lancelot du lac* (1974), or *Le Procès du Jeanne d'Arc* (1962). When directing, Bresson is acutely aware of the cinema's relationship to history and temporality, and his films play with these contrasts in time both through a film's themes, and through intermedial references to painting, sculpture, and theatre.

If Bresson creates alternative temporalities by bringing artworks (literally and figuratively) into the frame of the screen, then Erika Balsom explores the way contemporary artists instead bring the cinematic apparatus into the white cube of the museum, reversing the direction. In her work *Exhibiting Cinema in Contemporary Art* (2013), Balsom observes that, when taken out of its black box, the cinema instead becomes an outdated technology: "Retrieved from the teleological narrative of history, the cinema emerges as a

superannuated technology, a ruin to be explored so as to perhaps release, as Benjamin saw the Surrealists as having discovered, 'the revolutionary energies that appear in the 'outmoded.'" When cinema is moved into the rarified space of the museum, Balsom observes, it is presented as antiquated, outmoded, anachronistic, untimely, and what she defines as "the ruin."

The way such digital art creations reference the cinema recalls Walter Benjamin's insistence on an artistic practice built on the discarded objects of mass culture, since for him that is where history authentically resides. His *Das Passagen-Werk* (*The Arcades Project* 1927-1940) is structured around the implicit contrast between the arcades and contemporary Parisian life and technology. His work draws on the Surrealist strategy of placing past next to present to generate surprising and shocking juxtapositions between epochs, out of which a new historical present can manifest itself. We see something similar happening in the way cinema becomes appropriated by the museum as an outmoded object that is no longer "timely," but now exists in the cobwebs of the past.

Even before the emergence of digital media, cinema's history can be mapped by examining the way it draws on anachronistic and outmoded forms to generate new directions and meanings in visual form. Elena Garfinkel traces the way such American art-cinema directors as Todd Haynes, Paul Thomas Anderson, and Wes Anderson all develop an aesthetic based on the anachronistic and outmoded by developing an aesthetic of looking backward to generate a future. As Garfinkel phrases it, for these three directors, "The poignancy of the irrecoverable gap between past and present – between the 1950s, the 1970s and today, and between childhood and adulthood – becomes the subject of these films." Cinema constructs a time and space precisely in that gap between past and present.

In a similar way, Richard Grusin coins the term "post cinematic atavism," which he defines as a reversion to an earlier cinematic moment "that otherwise appears to have become extinct in the proliferation of hypermediated, digital, post-cine-

matic technical and aesthetic formats." In other words, the proliferation of digital forms results in a cinematic style that resuscitates discarded or outmoded cinematic strategies, much in the fashion of what has been termed "Slow Cinema." Grusin's analysis focuses on films from 2012 that were nominated for Best Picture at the Academy Awards – *Hugo* (Martin Scorsese, 2011), *The Tree of Life* (Terrence Malick, 2011), and the winning film *The Artist* (Michel Hazanavicius, 2011) – long with Lars von Trier's *Melancholia* (2011).

Examining the relationship between anachronism and the visual arts, as well as exploring the way this relationship can be used to understand the movement from one art form to another is a large undertaking. The present study is the first step in that process by tracing a few theoretical issues that emerge in the relationship between anachronism and cinematic intermediality in our current "post-cinema" environment, drawing on the films and style of Robert Bresson.

### Georges Didi-Huberman and the Anachronistic Tradition

Images certainly *have* a history; but what they *are*, the movement proper to them, their specific power, all that appears only as a symptom – a malaise, a more or less violent denial, a suspension – in history.<sup>2</sup>

The problem of determining artistic influence, and the relationship between artist and history has been much more extensively theorized in the field of art history than in cinema studies. Georges Didi-Huberman for example, criticizes the way a "euchronic" process is customarily preferred: decisions about the work of art are based on how well it has been made to *fit into* its particular historical moment. Such an approach

is on display in the vast majority of art historical studies, whose golden rule is that "anachronism must at all costs be avoided, and one must not project one's concepts, tastes, or values onto past realities".<sup>3</sup>

Didi-Huberman focuses on the abstract panel beneath Fra Angelico's fresco *Madone des ombres* (*Madonna of the Shadows*, 1440-1450), in which for scholars only a document of that particular time period will permit access to the "mental tools" of the time, even if an artist's contemporaries "do not seem to understand the work any better than those individuals separated in time."<sup>4</sup> Given our current fidelity to empiricism, such a document is seen to have the greatest truth value, even if just as many interpretative decisions are made, since scholars are trained to value scientific exactitude and specificity as the way to arrive at the greatest degree of truth: the more concrete the data we can amass about a particular object or moment, the more insightful and accurate our study will consequently be.<sup>5</sup>

Why does Didi-Huberman spend so much energy trying to tip the scales toward the positive virtues of anachronism? As Jacques Rancière points out, the situation is rather unique in France for those who theorize about the study of history. Rancière questions the methods of the French Annales school that formed in the 1920s, and specifically such historians as Lucien Febvre, who insists that anachronism is the "worst of all sins, the sin that cannot be forgiven," because fundamental to the historical process is the view that a "particular historical event or character must belong wholly to the time in which it or she found."<sup>6</sup> Rancière instead attempts to create what he calls "heretical histories," as in his study of proletarianism, *La nuit des prolétaires: Archives*

<sup>2</sup> Georges Didi-Huberman, *Devant le temps: Histoire de l'art et anachronism des images* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 2000), 25. All translations from this and other texts in French are my own unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Even today art historians rely on Cristoforo Landino's sixteen categories of art criticism to interpret Italian Quattrocento canvases. However, thirty years separates the death of Fra Angelico and Landino's categories, and these concepts substantially changed in meaning over the course of those years, not to mention the significant linguistic and cultural differences between the two men. For Didi-Huberman, the foundations of art history are built upon such anachronistic practices. See *Devant le temps*, 15, and *Devant l'image*, 52-53.

<sup>5</sup> Stott, Tim. "Introduction to Jacques Rancière's 'The Concept of Anachronism and the Historian's Truth,'" *InPrint* 3.1 (2015). Accessed 30 January, 2018. <http://arrow.dit.ie/inp/vol3/iss1/2>.

<sup>6</sup> Rancière, Jacques. "The Concept of Anachronism and the Historian's Truth (English translation)," *InPrint* Vol. 3: Issue 1 (2015). Accessed January 31, 2018. <http://arrow.dit.ie/inp/vol3/iss1/3>.

*du rêve ouvrier* (1981), by looking at individuals and events rather than cataloguing activities into larger social, economic or juridical systems. Anachronism thus contains a political force for Rancière, since the only possibility for radical change is by acknowledging the unusual, the exceptional, or the emergent, which can only come from the specific acts of those who are customarily ignored in such studies, rather than from a top-down conception of how the larger society must necessarily behave. The Annales' concept of history thus ends up being profoundly anti-historical, since by sealing off a particular time period, people and events can only reflect the larger *mentalités* into which they are born. Instead, Rancière ends his essay by gesturing toward the transformative power of the anachronistic in much the same spirit that emerges in the work of Didi-Huberman: "An anachrony is a word, an event, or a signifying sequence that has left 'its' time, and in this way is given the capacity to define completely original points of orientation (*les aiguillages*), to carry out leaps from one temporal line to another."

In a similar way, perhaps there are directions that film directors took, styles they assimilated, or innovations they developed that have no direct connection to—or at least cannot be so easily explained by—where they worked, who they befriended, or what the prevailing cultural attitudes were toward cinema in their day. Perhaps one goal of some directors was to be as anachronistic as the Fra Angelica described by Didi-Huberman, a Renaissance artist who employs a montage-like approach that draws on at least four radically different historical moments: a thirteenth and fourteenth century use of color; a fifteenth century use of perspective; Byzantine, and even Gothic iconography; and the abstract expressionist style of Jackson Pollock. Didi-Huberman thus encourages a view of history that isn't a linear or straightforward cause and effect process, but rather the art object stands at the nexus of a variety of historical times that, "enter

into collision, or are plastically based on each other, bifurcate, or become muddled together." The scholar struggles to smooth over such rough edges between history and artwork, presenting a seamlessness between particular artistic choices and the milieu in which she lived. Didi-Huberman instead encourages a movement in the opposite direction, creating new objects that are as revolutionary as the surrealist juxtapositions between historical epochs. Such juxtapositions make us realize that there is no unidirectional line of progress in history, but rather time progresses like a "bretzel." It is equally important that we do not view the object or image as having one assignable place for all times like the Annales historians, and precisely the motivation for Aby Warburg's concept of the interval.

The ultimate goal of such an approach, however, is not to deny history, or to promote an ahistorical perspective, but rather to dismiss the implicit abstractions of the historical method, ultimately to counter the ever-present assumption that there must be a one-to-one correspondence between an artist and the milieu in which he lived and worked.

### **Film Archeology: The Resistance to Chronology and Historical "Fact"**

The best model for an anachronistic approach to cinema can be found in the method developed by film archeologists. Much like the approach of Didi-Huberman, film archeology shares a distrust of established history, especially works that build on the insights of Michel Foucault and Walter Benjamin to develop a more complex model for the relationship between past objects or events and present-day explanations of them. According to Erkki Huhtamo and Jussi Parikka, media archaeologists construct, "alternate histories of suppressed, neglected, and forgotten media that do not point teleologically to the present media-cultural condition as their 'perfection,'" since inventions, styles, and ideas that did not survive also have equally important ramifications

on present-day practices.<sup>7</sup> A precursor to this approach would be the work of the German art historian Aby Warburg, whose *Mnemosyne Atlas* (1927-29) provides a catalog of shared visual motifs drawn from books, magazines, newspapers and other popular sources, which along with André Malraux's *Musée imaginaire* (1947), encourages readers to find, "the persisting life of certain forms, emerging ever and again like spectres of the past."<sup>8</sup> These two projects do not delimit visual images according to shared epoch or genre, but first establish commonalities through resemblance. As a result, such an approach stresses intermediality by focusing on the way particular motifs shift and transform over time and across media.

What anachronistic scholarship shares with media archeology is the desire to complicate a linear account of history by being receptive to a wide range of iconography and visual material. Such an approach illustrates what Eric Kluitenberg defines as the "fantasmatic" and what Janet Harbord terms "ex-centric cinema" in her study of Giorgio Agamben: hidden potentialities that indicate important clues to impractical, forgotten, or uncertain genealogies.<sup>9</sup> Such an approach can, in the words of Huhtamo, correct unexamined or entrenched beliefs by bringing the "neglected, misrepresented, and/or suppressed aspects of both media's past(s) and their present [...] into a conversation with each another."<sup>10</sup> Similarly, Thomas Elsaesser makes an eloquent case for viewing history not as a unified string of events, but rather as a series of discontinuous, heterogeneous, and differently caused eruptions in time. He discusses the significance of obsolescence, the subjectivity of memory and, "complex and contradictory relations of multiple causal chains,

to seriality and repetition, to stochastic causality."<sup>11</sup> And in his essay on the relationship between eighteenth-century Dutch still life painting and contemporary European art cinema, Jacques Aumont employs Aby Warburg's concept of migration to resist the view of history as progressive improvement, by being receptive to the emergence of obscure or underestimated influences in a film. Aumont ends his essay with a call for greater attention to the relationship between history and film studies that fully acknowledges the role played by the image, by facial representation, and by the visual register as cinema's genuine achievement.<sup>12</sup> Following Jacques Aumont's call, the present study unearths a wide range of figural and iconographic elements emerging from the middle ages to the early 1980s that cross disciplinary fields and reveal a complex overlapping of migrations within the visual arts.

### Robert Bresson, Painting and the Anachronistic

My 2018 monograph on Robert Bresson, *Late Bresson and the Visual Arts: Cinema, Painting and Avant-Garde Experiment* (Amsterdam University Press) argues that at the heart of Bresson's work is an intermedial impulse to juxtapose cinema with other visual arts such as painting, theatre and dance. I argue that one of the key motivations for citing a painting in a film is to contrast different temporalities, and that Bresson's art is especially attuned to such contrasts, in a process that unfolds in much the same way as the concept of anachronism. For this reason, I disagree with previous critics who discuss the way Bresson incorporates religious characters, themes, and iconography into his work. I believe that we should not rely on Bresson's own religious faith to explain

<sup>7</sup> Huhtamo, Erkki and Jussi Parikka, editors, *Media Archaeology: Approaches, Applications, and Implications* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 3.

<sup>8</sup> André Malraux, *Voices of Silence*, translation by Stuart Gilbert (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1978), 24.

<sup>9</sup> Eric Kluitenberg, "On the Archeology of Imaginary Media," *Media Archaeology: Approaches, Applications, and Implications*, Erkki Huhtamo and Jussi Parikka, eds. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 57; Janet Harbord, *Ex-centric Cinema: Giorgio Agamben and Film Archeology* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016).

<sup>10</sup> Erkki Huhtamo, "Dismantling the Fairy Engine: Media Archeology as Topos Study," *Media Archaeology: Approaches, Applications, and Implications*, ed. Erkki Huhtamo and Jussi Parikka (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 28.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Elsaesser, *Film History and Media Archaeology* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016), 337-338.

<sup>12</sup> Jacques Aumont, *Matière d'images* (Paris: Images Modernes, 2005), 57: "Que cela demande une analyse capable d'accepter la part d'image, la part de figure, la part de visual que comporte l'oeuvre de cinéma, ce n'est pas pour me déplaire."

such choices, but rather should turn to religious painting in the history of art, especially medieval icon painting, the visual hierarchy established in Renaissance painting between the earthy and the spiritual, the careful attention to light and shadow in the baroque, and the question of the invisible sublime, to better understand Bresson's motivations. In this section, I examine Bresson's allusions to the history of art and its relationship to the anachronistic by turning to art history.

The scholar Alexander Nagel develops a fascinating model to account for the relationship between a work of art and its historical context. Nagel elaborates on the theoretical underpinnings of his approach in his book *Anachronic Renaissance*, co-written with Christopher Wood. The authors examine Renaissance works of art in which all marks of time have been removed, such that the work seems to intentionally hesitate between historical forms without definitively settling on one. To understand the nature of this hesitation, Nagel and Wood draw on Walter Benjamin's notion of the aura: "the possible gain in legitimacy conferred by the marks of time is easily offset by the risk of loss of aura through fixing in time. To fix an image or temple in time is to reduce it to human proportions."<sup>13</sup> Painting's uniqueness is thus to be found in the way it at times hesitates between past and present, or between auratic transcendence and the everyday, since an artwork is capable of holding "incompatible models in suspension without deciding."<sup>14</sup> An artwork's ability to escape human time thus reveals its "anachronic" qualities, which is linked to the divine, since theologians read sacred texts as "indications of a suprahistorical divine plan that suspended earthly time."<sup>15</sup> The spiritual component of Bresson's films might equally be viewed as an effort to contrast historical time with a divine time that reestablishes some semblance

of auratic wholeness.

This suspension between historical moments is perhaps Bresson's most important inheritance from painting. While filming, Bresson seeks out "constant anachronisms" on set, and constructs his films outside any single, identifiable historical moment.<sup>16</sup> Bresson's two films set in the middle ages, *Le Procès de Jeanne d'Arc* and *Lancelot du lac*, intermingle archaic, preindustrial elements with modern ones, which explains the inclusion of such modern props as a chess board and a wooden tub in *Lancelot*. According to Bresson, his goal while filming *Lancelot du lac* was to create a setting without "[...] time or place. While working, it never occurred to me that the armor could be from any other age than our own. The iron clothing is simply an object that makes sounds, music, rhythm."<sup>17</sup> By not being tied to a concrete historical moment, Bresson suggests, the viewer can more fully concentrate on the sounds and rhythms of the present moment, a similar sentiment voiced by Georges Didi-Huberman, who ends his study of the anachronistic in art with Barnett Newman's "The Sublime is Now" (1948).<sup>18</sup> And in discussing *Le Procès de Jeanne d'Arc*, Bresson asks: "It is not strange that in our films the more we distance historical characters from their époque, the closer they get to us, and the more true they are."<sup>19</sup> Precisely by distancing Jeanne from any recognizable historical time or place, she becomes the most authentic and believable. Bresson's pressing concern while in the director's chair is that too much historical detail will eliminate new possible stories, reducing the film's unique ability to capture the body in the present moment. He succinctly sums up this idea in response to a question about an ambiguous plot point in *Au hasard Balthazar*: "I would like it if all historic details were eliminated from a film."<sup>20</sup>

Such a desire to move beyond a single histori-

<sup>13</sup> Alexander Nagel and Christopher S. Wood. *Anachronic Renaissance* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2010), 8.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>16</sup> Baby, Yvonne. "Du fer qui fait du bruit," *Le Monde* (September 26, 1974), 15. Reprinted in *Bresson par Bresson*, 290.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Georges Didi-Huberman, *Devant le temps: Histoire de l'art et anachronisme des images* (Paris: Les Éditions de minuit, 2000). Didi-Huberman draws extensively on Benjamin's concept of history.

<sup>19</sup> Kovacs, Yves, "Entretien avec Robert Bresson," *Cahiers du cinéma* 140 (May 1963): 410. Reprinted in *Bresson par Bresson*, 127.

<sup>20</sup> Robert Bresson, "Pour le plaisir," ORTIF Télévision (May 11, 1966). Reprinted in *Bresson par Bresson*, 207.

cal event or explanation perhaps stems for Bresson from the radical ambition of the surrealists, who juxtapose historical events to subvert the linearity of historical time. Bresson's resistance to historical chronology most directly emerges in the way he disrupts a viewer's ability to make coherent sense of the story. The protagonist commits suicide in *Une femme douce*, for example, as if to release the viewer from the obligations of story by revealing the most important dramatic event at the start of the film. Bresson also subverts narrative chronology to problematize the notion of a clearly delineated before and after. In *Une femme douce*, he eliminates conventional flashback in the way he shifts between the dead wife on display in the present, and past scenes of her when she is still alive in the past. Bresson claims that these scene changes do not indicate any movement between past and present: "It is not the rather banal story of a young married couple that attracted me. It is instead the possibility of a constant confrontation, a continual juxtaposition between two images: a dead young girl, and a living young girl [...] these are not flashbacks, but something else: the confrontation between life and death."<sup>21</sup> The constant movement between the dead and living protagonist reflects a consummate surrealist interest in animating the lifeless body and killing the animate one, in addition to giving the gentle woman—and the film—a timelessness that transcends the artificial human categories of past and present.

Bresson employs a related strategy to distance his films from their historical moment by juxtaposing the antiquated with the modern. André Bazin describes this contradictory movement as "the reciprocal interplay of seemingly incompatible elements" in *Journal d'un curé de campagne* (1951), such as the tension between an eighteenth-century revenge tale and the modern focus on prostitution, or the contrast between a Denis Diderot script and the robotic movement

of windshield wipers as they rhythmically glide across a car window in *Les Dames de Bois de Bologne*.<sup>22</sup> Building on Bazin's insight, Luc Moullet introduces the term "bi-temporality" to describe this tendency in *L'Argent* (1983):

[...] we begin to see that everywhere there is this alliance of contrasts: films juxtaposing modern elements (scooters, mopeds, the Citroën 2CV, shopping in Auteuil, credit card cheats in *L'Argent*), and elements of a revolutionary past (in the same film, people still do their laundry at *lavoirs*, and Bresson's contemporary rural films evoke instead a dignified countryside from the time of the filmmaker's youth—always the idea of "youth"—or the end of the nineteenth century with all its stereotypes, bottles close to the edge of the table that are going to break, axe murders, no electricity, etc.).<sup>23</sup>

Bresson is not the first to juxtapose the antiquated past with the hypermodern. Charles Baudelaire creates a much earlier example in *Les fleurs du mal* (1857) by superimposing archaic myth onto the present as a way of illustrating to what extent humanity has been evacuated from nineteenth-century Paris. Benjamin's *The Arcades Project* is similarly built on the stark contrast between the arcades and present-day forms of technology. Both Benjamin and Bresson situate their approach within a surrealist tradition that draws explicitly on the temporal slippages characteristic of the surrealists' outmoded visions. Miriam Hansen even describes the connections between Benjamin and the surrealist method in these terms: "the return of archaic, cyclical, mythological time in the accelerated succession of the new (fashion, technology)," on display for instance in depictions of the epoch of Louis VII within André Breton's *Nadja*.<sup>24</sup> By examining objects removed from their historical context, Benjamin insists, the viewer comes to realize the arbitrary nature of material signification, and, as a result, the fantasy and emptiness of the commodity itself.

Given the way that Bresson lingers over the machine, he perhaps would not condemn modern technology to the same extent as the Benjamin

<sup>21</sup> Bresson, *Bresson par Bresson*, 248.

<sup>22</sup> Bazin, "Le Journal d'un curé de campagne," 130.

<sup>23</sup> Luc Moullet, "Robert Bresson: Think, You Fool," *Robert Bresson Revised*, ed. James Quandt (Toronto: Toronto International Film Festival Cinémathèque, 2011), 512.

<sup>24</sup> Hansen, *Cinema and Experience*, 331.

of *The Arcades Project*. Bresson's considerable affinities with the history of painting suggest additional motivations beyond commodity critique, such as an impulse to remove historical specificity. While this impulse can be seen to tap into a surrealist, even Marxist desire to employ the outdated and archaic to create new commodity relations, it also belongs to an established fine arts tradition of balancing the auratic, spiritual work against one that offers markings of its age and time. My hunch is that these small differences point to broader similarities between the two men, since Benjamin's response to modernity so closely resembles Bresson's ambivalence in acknowledging technology's dangers while offering new representations of the relationship between man and machine. Benjamin's view of history, his definition of the aura in contradistinction to the modern, his conception of the anachronistic, and his discussion of technological innervation in early drafts of "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," provide highly rewarding lines of inquiry in understanding Bresson's own response to the history of artistic figuration, as well as in charting Bresson's complex aesthetics of anachronism.

## Conclusion

The present study has mapped a few important theoretical concerns in the field I have defined as "cinematic anachronism," using the style and artistic tendencies of the French post-war filmmaker Robert Bresson. This study is necessarily a small step toward a much larger project that imagines a branch of film criticism using the model of anachronism to distinguish and understand, not only cinema, but a range of contemporary visual technologies each of which draw on a distinctive set of temporalities and intermedial allusions. In this sense, cinema is not dead, but rather constantly being reimagined and reinvented anew. We need a method to better understand these subterranean transformations from one visual media to another, and, this study suggests, a model using the concepts of anachronism provides a promising step forward in that direction.

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